



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Mental Health First Aid

Jondell Lafont-Garcia

August 9, 2024

Agenda

- What is Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)?
- Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) Legislative Initiative
- Why is MHFA important?
- MHFA Courses
- How is MHFA different?
- Employee Initiative



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

What is MHFA?

- A skills-based training course
- Teaches signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use problems
- Builds understanding of impact
- Reviews common treatments
- Provides an action plan to follow



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas HHS and MHFA

- Legislative Initiative
 - ▶ Based on the 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013 through 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 legislation
 - ▶ HHS contracts with 39 Texas local mental health and behavioral health authorities
 - ▶ Goal: To maximize the number of Texans who have direct contact with a fellow Texan who successfully completed a MHFA training program



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Why is MHFA important?

- Texas has higher rates of mental illness and lower rates of access to care compared to other states.
- Community members learn about mental illness and substance use disorders, which potentially saves lives.
- Many people are reluctant to seek help.
- Many people don't know how to offer help or intervene.
- MHFA aims to reduce stigma of mental illness and substance use disorders.



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Why is Youth MHFA important? (1 of 2)

- Substance use problems typically begin in adolescence and early adulthood; early intervention is critical.
- 49.5% of U.S. adolescents ages 13-18 have a mental health disorder.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents ages 15-18.
- Many adults don't know signs and symptoms of mental illness or how they manifest in youth.



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Why is Youth MHFA important? (2 of 2)

- Youth with emotional or mental health issues are misidentified as having behavioral issues.
- Youth lack the vocabulary and/or developmental ability to explain their concerns.
- It can sometimes be difficult to distinguish mental health concerns from typical childhood behavior.



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

MHFA Delivery Options

- In-person
- Blended
- Virtual



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

MHFA Courses

- Instructor
- Adult
- Youth
- Teen



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Adult MHFA

- Teaches adults how to recognize signs of mental health or substance use challenges in adults ages 18 and older
- Teaches participants how to offer and provide initial help using a five-step action plan
- Teaches participants how to guide a person toward appropriate care if necessary
- Builds understanding to reduce stigma



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Youth MHFA

- Intended for adults to learn how to help young people experiencing mental health or substance use challenges
- Reviews unique risk factors for youth ages 12-18 years
- Emphasizes the importance of early intervention
- Shows differences between youth and adult display of symptoms



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

How is MHFA different?

- Taught by a live instructor
- Hands-on experience through real-life scenarios
- Offers concrete tools
- Provides resources in local areas
- Provides a three-year certification with a manual and processing guide to keep upon completion



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

MHFA Employee Initiative

- State agency employee instructors train other state employees in youth or adult MHFA.
- There are approximately 45 youth and adult MHFA instructors across the state.
- In-person and virtual classes are offered.
- From 2015 to 2023, 5,082 employees have been trained.



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

How can I take a class?

- Community members:
 - ▶ Contact your local mental health or behavioral health authority:
 - ▶ hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use/mental-health-substance-use-resources/find-your-local-mental-health-or-behavioral-health-authority
- State employees:
 - ▶ Contact Jondell Lafont-Garcia, MHFA Coordinator:
MentalHealthFirstAid@hhsc.state.tx.us



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Thank you

MentalHealthFirstAid@hhsc.state.tx.us